

The TWU Healthcare Newsletter

January 22, 2010
Volume 9

WE NEED HEALTHCARE NOW! Regroup and Refocus

The healthcare reform bill that the Senate passed broke a fundamental promise: that healthcare would not be financed on the backs of working people and that our benefits would not be taxed.

Last week, as the AFL-CIO and the White House made a deal on the excise tax, the Transport Workers Union and International President Jim Little wrote a letter to the Members of Congress and the Senate. We stood in opposition to ANY healthcare bill that taxes our benefits. We are one of only three unions that has stood up solidly against the excise tax!

A copy of this letter can be found on the reverse side of this newsletter.

The tax was the **WRONG POLICY** and people simply **WOULD NOT STAND FOR IT!**

On Tuesday, voters in Massachusetts elected Republican Scott Brown as their next Senator over Democrat Martha Coakley. They voted for a man whose party is in lockstep to kill healthcare reform and that refuses to even consider legislation that could benefit working people. But why?

According to a poll conducted by Hart Research Associates immediately following the election, one of the major reasons voters supported Brown was:

THE EXCISE TAX!

Voters who thought their benefits would be taxed voted for Brown 2:1. BUT, they were equally likely to vote for Brown or

Coakley based on their position on healthcare reform overall. **THIS WAS NOT A VOTE AGAINST HEALTHCARE, THIS WAS A VOTE AGAINST THE EXCISE TAX!**

The Democrats have now lost their filibuster proof 60 vote majority in the Senate and the path to achieving comprehensive healthcare reform is increasingly difficult. There are a few possible options:

1. Pass a bill by using the reconciliation process, which allows for legislation to be passed quickly if it has an impact on the budget. In the Senate, we would only need 51 votes to pass a reconciliation bill.

2. The House can pass the Senate bill with a companion bill that will act as an amendment. The companion bill would be passed using reconciliation and may fix some of the outstanding issues with the bill.

3. Pass several smaller bills that cover some of the more popular aspects of healthcare reform.

4. Start all over.

We wish we could tell you more, but the truth is no one really knows what is going to happen. As soon as we know, you'll know.

You Should Know

The budget reconciliation process is an optional procedure that operates as an adjunct to the budget resolution process established by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974. The chief purpose of the reconciliation process is to enhance Congress's ability to change current law in order to bring revenue, spending, and debt-limit levels into conformity with the policies of the annual budget resolution.

The two-part reconciliation process first requires committees to draft legislation to address Congressional concerns and then provides expedited procedures to allow for the quick passage of bills that have an important impact on the national budget.

January 14, 2010

Dear Member of Congress or Senator:

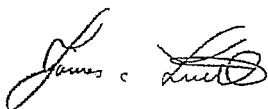
On behalf of the Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO, and our over 250,000 active and retired members I am writing to you to express our **strong opposition** to the **excise tax provision** in the Patient Protection and Affordability Act of 2009. This tax amounts to a betrayal of the campaign promise made by President Barack Obama that alluded to our hard earned, collectively bargained, healthcare benefits would not be taxed under his healthcare reform plan. We now express our intention to oppose this bill if the excise tax is not eliminated from it.

Supporters of this tax claim that it is a tax on "Cadillac" healthcare plans held by wealthy bankers and business executives, but it's not. The reality is that the vast majority of plans considered "Cadillac" are comprehensive health plans held by middle class working Americans which includes union members who have foregone increases in their pay to have access to fuller healthcare benefits. A tax on these plans amounts directly to a tax on our members and sends the signal that this Congress and this President think it is acceptable to pay for healthcare reform on the backs of working Americans.

As it is currently written, an excise tax of 40% would be levied on insurance companies for health plans with annual premiums above \$8,500 for individuals and \$23,000 for families. This description is misleading because we all know that the costs of these taxes will be passed down to workers one way or another. Employers will probably cut the benefits that they offer to get their plans under the threshold. In any scenario, such a tax hurts workers, especially those with collectively bargained benefits or in high risk professions where more comprehensive benefits can mean the difference between a lifetime of health or a lifetime of suffering due to ailments caused by high risk jobs. Furthermore, we strongly believe that the threshold cannot be raised high enough to protect all workers from having their benefits taxed.

There is only one option: eliminate the excise tax from the bill. If the tax is not eliminated, we will be forced to oppose this bill.

In Solidarity,



James C. Little
International President

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The Local 514 Working Women's Committee (WWC) is Starting a New Year with an New Attitude.

The WWC will be having their first meeting of the year on February 11, 2010 at the Union Hall, 3:15 pm. We are inviting all ladies to join us in a new year of helping, educating, and mentoring union women at American Airlines. Please

attend to see what we are about and meet the women who support and help Local 514 in many ways. If you have any questions feel free to call Malinda Hamm, Chairperson of the Working Women's Committee, at 918-576-1717.



VS Mississippi

When: **Saturday January 30th**

Where: **The BOK Center**

Time: **7:35 pm**

Vouchers for **FREE** tickets are available at the Union Hall, 11945 East Pine Street, for the above games. Quantities are **LIMITED** to 10 tickets per member. Each member must pick up their own tickets. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Gibson at 231-1042.